



NEWS & INFORMATION

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Iowans should prepare for another hardship: high energy prices this winter

Having already endured unprecedented hardships in recent months, Iowans should take steps now to reduce the impacts of increased energy prices this winter heating season. Many utilities have estimated natural gas prices this winter could be at least 25 percent higher than last year.

Weather and demand remain unknown factors, but natural gas prices have been high as the utility companies serving Iowa purchase portions of their natural gas supplies for the upcoming winter heating season. The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) will monitor natural gas prices throughout this fall and winter to keep customers informed.

For many years, the IUB has worked closely with rate-regulated utilities that serve the majority of Iowa natural gas customers in implementing strategies to help protect consumers from high bills like those first seen during the 2000-2001 winter heating crisis. This includes utilities locking in the cost for portions of their natural gas supplies in advance. These protections continue to benefit Iowa customers. However, the wellhead price of natural gas is competitive. The IUB ensures that customers pay the same gas supply prices paid by utilities.

For those customers affected by recent flooding and storms, this news comes during a difficult time. Iowans should, however, consider that these unfortunate circumstances provide opportunities for energy savings. Many utilities offer cash rebates for the purchase of energy efficient appliances. Some Iowa utilities, including MidAmerican Energy Company and Interstate Power and Light Company (Alliant Energy), have increased rebate amounts on energy efficient appliance purchases made by flood-affected customers this year, so inquire with your local utility.

Examples of wise energy-efficiency investments, regardless of utility or even manufacturer rebates, include programmable thermostats, high efficiency heating and/or cooling systems, hot water heaters, replacement windows, additional or replacement insulation, washers or dryers, refrigerators, and stoves. To assure energy efficiency when purchasing new appliances, look for the ENERGY STAR label. More information about the ENERGY STAR program for improving energy efficiency is available at www.homeenergysaver.lbl.gov.

A simple, short-term step for conserving energy is to adjust your thermostat for sleeping or periods when your home will be unoccupied. If constantly changing your thermostat is difficult, consider a programmable thermostat. Another inexpensive step to help mitigate heating costs is to weatherize around leaky windows and doors and on exterior walls in areas that are usually cold or drafty. Please contact your local utility for additional energy efficiency information in preparation for this winter.

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